

Walks about - Basingstoke

"There is no pleasure I in travelling, except on horseback, or on foot."
Collect.

Travelling Hampshire by the South-Western Railway. The first town of importance you come to is Basingstoke, where the traveller may settle himself for a week or two in the pleasant hope of finding a walk of pursuit on which he may stay.

The country is the north of the Basingstoke Canal - the hills are lovely enough, being within the London Basin, but, far out of the valley & surrounded on either hand, they are unimproved with the diversity which is the charm of Hampshire scenery. At one moment, the eye rests on sweeps of shimmering corn, shut in by brown-tinted hedges, & beyond these, more flowing fields, until the openings framed by the hedges reveal only a pale blue haze. But - turn your head, & you have a wild heather waste, not - faintly, but "household bread or fattest steers," but the life is more than meat: - the bright - sounds & odours of these Hampshire heaths, the air that blows upon them, are pure life & nothing less.

There is no reason for lingering at Basingstoke, but there is another, you are in the heart of a magnificent & rich in associations, historical & personal; here you easily get at half-a-dozen places you have read of all your life with a long list of names; & you are across them, with delightful histories, of which you have never even heard. Basingstoke

Even ^{the} the train steams into the station, your interest is
excited: What is that graceful ruin on the rise just above
us? You ask a yellow passenger; almost-likely his answer
will be wide of the mark: "only an antiquated ruin," he will
say; but a stout answer is, "one of the abbey, unscathed
by Henry VIII."

But we must see the town before we explore the ruin.
We go our way towards the ~~place~~ long High Street
of Basingstoke - the main thoroughfare of the pleasant
country town, where houses & shops have 'grown' big
& little, shoulder to shoulder; where big shops with awns
& pillars may be kept by nobody, & where you take for
a small basket-maker's leads into an ample, well-kept
town with good gardens behind; the little shops kept
by people of substance, & the ministers is kindly ready
to say well able to tell you a great deal about Basingstoke.

Basingstoke is the market town for an agricultural
district of some ~~20,000~~ people; and, "in 1214, Wednesday
was, as now, the market-day"! Here is respectable
antiquity & stability! Think of the farmers of seven
centuries ago pattering on the same spot, for
the same purpose, on the same day of the week, &
- though more picturesque perhaps in dress & look
surely, no doubt, & the farmers of today in coats
& frock coats; pieces of paper, perhaps, but hard & light
of heart; for 'agricultural distress' is a far cry, reaching
back to the Congress of Antwerp.

The old town has had time to grow mellow, & there, in
one or two streets, are quaint timbered houses

with overhanging stories. Some ~~two~~ centuries ago,
these ancient houses brought Basingstoke into
disrepute. In 1609, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III,
made a 'grand tour' which included England, bringing
with him a secretary to write down his impressions
& an artist to illustrate them. The famous building
these men saw here left them brought home to
Basingstoke; she ate down the houses as poor, being
partly of wood, & subject to the projecting stories (but indeed)
these a European prince, used to the magnificent
chateaux of his own land, should think
our domestic architecture poor & inferior is hardly
matter for surprise.

The fine parish church is dedicated to St. Michael & all
Angels - an unusual dedication for a church not
sit on a hill, accounted for by the fact that this
St. Michael was attached to the famous monastery
of St. Michael in Normandy. The glass of the west
window in the north aisle has a tale attached to it.
After Basingstoke was taken by Henry II &
he was captured during the civil war; the walls of the
church, especially on the south side, have been well
repaired, by which side does not appear, but the
Parliamentarians are fully credited with all such work
of grace.

The Rectory, with pleasant grounds, which is
laid on plans - the "Sweet-natured Streams" of Thomas
Warton, the younger, is not without distinction. The

elder Thomas Warton (1713) was, of the most famous actors.
during the reign of Henry II, a friend of Henry II, who was his
favourite; & a plan of Basingstoke (1162), which is the first of its kind
in the world; it is the first of its kind in the world.

Notwithstanding its antiquity, ^{L 2174 E 12 34} Beamsley^{has} hardly had
much of English history, except - as being in the near
neighbourhood of Basing House at the time of the celebrated
siege. One Elias Archer ⁱⁿ gives a "True Relation" (1643)
mentions the ^{present} occupation of the town by
Royal Troops, ^{tells} how the troops of the Parliament requested
themselves there, "in respect of the extremity of hard
service & cold weather."

How did the town folk of Beamsley regard this
coming & going of the troops, & all the bother of the war?
Here is a letter which tells what we want to know - printed
here by Canon Miller's kind permission. — *

to kindness of the Rev. Canon Miller as an

* The writer owes much to Canon Miller's ~~kindness~~
archaeological ^{of} accomplishments. The following
sketch of the history of the Long Cross Chapel is an
unworthy reproduction of a most interesting & charming verbal
account given on the spot.

This pamphlet is weight with a little seven lines
long, beginning, "Good News from South Hampshire
And Basingstoke in Hampshire. As it is related
in a letter from thence by one Master Zoller, to
a Merchant of good quality, in Lombard Street,"
with pretty as much more.

Basingstoke his tenth day of December
1642.

Sir
New say my Lord Fredericks troop of Horse
and Colonel Greyes Dragoons eleven days,
we had imploiment enough to dress the meat
& provide drinks for them, but last Friday they
went away, & as we heard, are gone to Marlborough,
& many say they heard the Guns go off very heavily.

The KING was expected here in this Town
this day: here we saw many Gentlemen come thirty
miles to meet him, but returned presently
hearing the contrary. It hath been a great charge
to our Town; they demanded two thousand
yards of wollen cloth, & gave hundred yards of
linnen, at fourteen pence the yard. Both
linnen Drapers bought their in, but the clothiers
scattered Drapers made no great hurt, so they served
themselves some at one shop, & a greater quantity
at another.

If you see Master Lenny, tell him to save his
purse in going away, but they shall hold with
his horse, & may come down safely now, & see
what a doer: pray God send peace, or else see
what will come to his land quickly. I hope you
at London desire peace, as well as we, though perhaps
you are not so much in danger as we are, yet enough.
I believe you are not quite out yet: so thus with
my love & best yours,
H. W.

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The Holy Ghost Chapel.

Working on way by means of steps up the chert
down crowned by that picturesque ruin which is the
ruin ^{interest} of Basingstoke, we find ourselves upon
the liten -

"A name which is for aye,
A thousand years hath it borne that name,
And shall for a thousand more; -
In the liten is a very ancient burying ground,
(A.S. lith, a corpse, as in 'lych gate'), when it is said
that seven kings were buried: there is a tradition that
on one occasion, seven kings were here together - come,
perhaps, with burying of Athelwold.
There is another instance of the pleasing continuity
of things in Basingstoke: of all modern institutions
belonging to towns, the cemetery is usually the
newest; most modern; its very raison d'être
is, in most cases, that the parish churchyard will
hold no more: but, here, the cemetery is an
extension of the ancient liten, a burying
place a thousand years ago. Even now, however,
there is something to the fore of modern
taste; why need such a pair of extraordinary
black & white chapels have been run up under
the very shadow of a fine full of dignity &
grace? Nevertheless, this is a quiet, concentrated
resting place, a little of the week & day
air of cemetery, where ~~the~~ the crumbling
read-stones of the liten & link the mound
not yet grass-grown with the former generations
gone